United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• President of South Africa says apartheid could not have been vanquished without help of United Nations; Cyprus, Hungary, India, Syria and Republic of Korea among other speakers in General Assembly's general debate today.

• Security Council, in resolution adopted on Friday, extends UNPROFOR mandate for six months; urges Bosnian Serbs to respect Croatia's territorial integrity.

• Security Council condemns recent attack on UNPROFOR troops and reported statements that Bosnian Serbs will retaliate against Force following tightening of sanctions against them.

• Secretary-General, in World Habitat Day message, says development challenge has become challenge of urban settlements.

• Tajik Head of State says CIS peace-keeping force in his country should have status of United Nations operation; Monaco, Liechstenstein, Malta, Singapore, Denmark, Guatemala, Afghanistan and Benin among other speakers in general debate on Friday.

• States Parties establish Ad Hoc Group to consider measures to strengthen Convention on Prohibition of Bacteriological Weapons.

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The President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, told the General Assembly today that apartheid could not have been vanquished without the great efforts of the United Nations. Apartheid was a brazen challenge to the very existence of the Organization, which had been borne out of the struggle against nazism and fascism, and their pernicious practices of racial superiority and genocide. The people of South Africa saluted the United Nations and its Member States for joining forces with them in a common struggle that had brought about their emancipation and pushed back the frontiers of racism.

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Because South Africa knew racism so deeply, it stood a good chance of developing and nurturing its opposite -- a just society, he continued. Some steps had already been taken, including the establishment of a Government of National Unity, transformation of the institutions of state and the cultivation of a national consensus on major issues. However, political emancipation had brought into focus the urgent need to secure freedom from want, hunger and ignorance. South Africa's institutions and resources must be dedicated to ending poverty, joblessness, homelessness and the despair that came with deprivation. Stability and democracy depended upon changing the material conditions of the people, so that "they not only have the vote, but they have bread and work as well", he said. South Africa would need the continued support of the United Nations to better the conditions of life for its people.

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President Glafcos Clerides of Cyprus today said that the United Nations should focus on reversing aggression and foreign occupation, supporting democracy, dealing with socio-economic inequalities, protecting the environment and promoting human rights. The Security Council could play a more important role than ever. It must act with determination and consistency, and never apply double standards. Protecting human rights was an indispensable ingredient for a stable, just and democratic world order. In order to achieve full respect for human rights, the international community must oppose extreme nationalism and ethnic segregation.

Cyprus remained divided as a result of foreign aggression and military occupation, he continued. Cyprus was a test case of the resolve of the United Nations to enforce respect for its will expressed in numerous resolutions. Since the invasion in 1974, the number of Turkish troops in Cyprus had increased, despite Assembly resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces. The presence of Turkish occupation troops threatened the people of Cyprus and had given rise to a kind of arms race. The Council should consider coercive measures against the side that was flouting its resolutions, or adopt other more effective procedures. He proposed that the leaders of the two communities make a solemn declaration to the Secretary-General renouncing the use of force and pledging to take all necessary measures to prevent attacks by one community against the other.

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Hungarian Foreign Minister Laszlo Kovacs said his country had a vital stake in the restoration of peace and international legality in the former Yugoslavia. The situation of the sizeable Hungarian ethnic community in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and other factors combined to inspire Hungary towards active involvement in the search for a settlement. In that regard, the international community should uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter and enforce relevant Security Council resolutions.

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Regional organizations should be involved, under the umbrella of the United Nations and the Security Council, in safeguarding or restoring international peace and security, he continued. Noting that Hungary would take over the chairmanship-in-office of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) this fall, he said it would pay particular attention to cooperation between the CSCE and the United Nations. Establishing a genuine and practical division of responsibilities between the CSCE and the United Nations in the settlement of conflicts within the CSCE region could be a major step forward. He went on to say that the United Nations should seek innovative ways to safeguard human rights. Rather than responding only to reported violations, it should develop effective preventive mechanisms. Upon a decision of the competent United Nations organ, civilian human rights monitors could be deployed wherever the human rights situation warranted preventive action.

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India's Commerce Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, said the United Nations must give peace and development equal priority. True peace could only follow disarmament and development. It was time to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament issues. However, disarmament alone would not be enough, as disparities in wealth could trigger violent revolutions within States. Commitment to and implementation of a substantive agenda for development was needed. For the World Summit for Social Development to succeed, participants should agree to dedicate additional resources to national programmes around the world.

With the end of the cold war, the Security Council found itself shouldering an enormous burden, he continued. Peace-keepers had sometimes been sent in pursuit of objectives whose connection with peace was rather tenuous. The principles of respect for the sovereignty of States and their territorial integrity, and of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, should be adhered to. There should also be no hesitation in ending peace-keeping operations which had been overtaken by events or which had become inconsistent with their mandates. The Council must also adhere to the principles of democracy and good governance which were urged upon all States. Its membership must be expanded to include developing countries as permanent members. By any criterion -- population, economy, contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security -- India deserved permanent membership.

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Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara noted that his country had been one of the first in the Middle East to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Regrettably, Israel had not joined the NPT, nor had it opened its nuclear installations to international inspection. In 1989, Syria had taken the initiative in calling for a Middle East region free of all weapons of mass-destruction. However, Israel had not responded to that call. The issue was most serious, particularly in light of the ongoing peace process in the region. He called on Israel to accede to the

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NPT and to put its nuclear installations under the inspection of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Three years had passed since the convening of the Madrid Conference, yet a just and comprehensive peace had not been achieved in the Middle East, he continued. Peace could not be achieved through half-solutions or agreements which encroached on national dignity and compromised the interests of the nation. The agreements reached had only responded to the demands of Israel in the land for peace formula, while the Arab party which had signed them was still awaiting Israel's response to its demands. Syria also wanted peace, but the peace process could not be completed without an Israeli withdrawal from the whole of the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon.

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Han Sung-Joo, the Republic of Korea's Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that to achieve world peace, the issue of social and economic development must be addressed. The United Nations should serve as a forum for nations to work out remedies for economic and social problems. Next year's World Summit for Social Development would produce an effective and feasible action plan to address social development. A balance must be struck between environment and development, and developing countries should be supported with financial contributions and transfers of environmentally sound technology.

Another critical aspect of global peace and security was the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, both nuclear and biochemical, he continued. The nuclear problem threatened not only the Korean peninsula, but also the region. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in implementing the safeguards agreement and the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. If the Democratic People's Republic fulfilled its obligations in good faith, the Republic of Korea would be willing to assist it in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Depending on the resolution of the nuclear issue, the Republic of Korea stood ready to make its technological and capital resources available for the overall economic development of the Democratic People's Republic in the spirit of mutual prosperity.

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The Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for six months to 31 March 1995, and urged all parties to cooperate with the Force. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council also urged the Bosnian Serbs to respect the territorial integrity of Croatia. It took that action by unanimously adopting resolution 947 (1994) on Friday night.

The Council asked the Secretary-General to report by 20 January 1995 on progress in implementing the United Nations Peace-keeping Plan for Croatia. The report should include information on progress towards the opening of road and railways between Croatia and United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs), the

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establishment of water and electricity supplies in all areas of Croatia, and the opening of the Adriatic pipeline.

The Council declared that the restoration of Croatian authority in the "pink zones", to the extent that it was compatible with the 29 March 1994 cease-fire agreement, must be accomplished under the close supervision of UNPROFOR. It affirmed the right of all displaced persons to voluntarily return to their homes and reaffirmed that land-ownership commitments made under duress were null and void. It also urged that a pilot project for the voluntary return to selected villages in or near the zone of separation be put into effect as soon as possible.

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The Security Council has condemned an attack on United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) peace-keepers which occurred on 22 September. In a statement read out by the President for September, Antonio Yanez Barnuevo (Spain), on Friday, the Council also condemned reported statements by Bosnian Serbs that they would target UNPROFOR activities in retaliation for the tightening of Council sanctions against them. It warned the Bosnian Serb leadership against retaliatory actions against UNPROFOR or any other party.

The Council expressed concern at the deteriorating security situation in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, noting increased violence, attacks on UNPROFOR troops and humanitarian flights, and restrictions on public utilities and transport. It called on the Bosnian Serbs not to interfere with the functioning of Sarajevo airport and to cooperate with efforts to restore gas and electricity flows to the city.

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The challenge of development has become the challenge of urban settlements, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a message for World Habitat Day, he pointed out that the overwhelming majority of the world's population would be living in cities by the twenty-first century.

The Secretary-General noted that the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) would take place in Istanbul in June 1996. It would be the last in a series of global conferences which sought to construct a global plan of action for a new development vision. He called on the international community to use the indispensable opportunity offered by Habitat II to realize a greater and more human vision for life in the next century.

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Emomali Rakhmonov, Head of State and Chairman of the Supreme Council of Tajikistan, told the General Assembly on Friday that his country was firmly committed to building a democratic and secular State based on the rule of law. A referendum would be held to decide on the adoption of a new

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constitution which provided a legal basis for subsequent reforms. He expressed satisfaction over the results of political consultations between the Government and the Tajik opposition in Tehran last month. The parties had signed a cease-fire agreement, which was an important step towards national reconciliation, peace and stability. The question of dispatching United Nations military observers to the country should be solved without delay.

He regretted the recurrent outbreaks of violence initiated by "the unmotivated escalation of the armed opposition and manifested in acts of terror and other subversive actions". Tajikistan's political leaders had taken a series of practical steps to strengthen confidence measures. He noted that the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) had helped Tajikistan to protect its southern borders. Tajikistan recognized the special role of the Russian Federation as the guarantor of security for all central Asian States. The CIS joint peace-keeping forces were the decisive deterrence factor on the Tajik-Afghan border. The Council should consider conferring the status of a United Nations peace-keeping operation on those forces.

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Prince Albert of Monaco said on Friday that there was no way to deal rapidly with the consequences of some of the conflicts raging around the world. Women, children and the elderly -- the weakest and most vulnerable groups -- were being threatened and victimized. At such times, all the international community could do was resort to humanitarian action. Bearing in mind the Security Council's decisions on Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed at protecting civilians, and inspired by France's courage in Rwanda, the international community should draft a treaty through which States parties would undertake in advance, in case of conflict, to designate areas reserved for defenceless children, women and elderly people.

Boundaries would have to be set with the agreement of the parties, he continued. Special access to the designated areas by road or air should be provided for. Protection should be ensured by unarmed agents, preferably volunteers working under the auspices of the United Nations. Those agents should bear distinct insignia, such as white helmets, as had previously been suggested by others. The Geneva Conventions, which already envisaged security zones, should be drawn upon in drafting the treaty. It would be significant if all States could sign it on the occasion of the Organization's fiftieth anniversary. Such a treaty would greatly facilitate the work of humanitarian relief agencies.

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Liechtenstein's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture, Youth and Sport, Andrea Willi, stressed the need to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the Security Council. The working group on equal representation and expansion of the Council should not only cover the enlargement of the Council, but also its working methods. Next year's World Summit for Social Development could be a crucial event for the future of mankind. The opportunity to promote social progress should not be missed. A summary and analysis of the

activities undertaken during the current International Year of the Family could contribute to the successful outcome of the World Summit.

The promotion and protection of human rights was of great importance, she continued. The General Assembly must take determined action, including the allocation of an increased budget, in that regard. Last year, at the request of Liechtenstein, a new sub-item was included in the Assembly's agenda on "Effective realization of the right to self-determination through autonomy." Remarks made during the debate on the matter, as well as comments outside the Assembly, had confirmed that it was a timely initiative. Liechtenstein had given a grant to Princeton University to establish a research programme on self-determination, to be conducted under the auspices of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Two future conferences organized by the School would be open to Member States.

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Guido de Marco, Malta's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, said the conclusion of the Uruguay Round this year and the setting up of the World Trade Organization could provide a means by which trade practices became more transparent and fair. Trade was the driving force behind economic growth and social stability, and a lack of viable economic activity undermined democratic societies. He also stressed the importance of bilateral and regional cooperation.

In the past seven years, the Government of Malta had committed itself to strengthening pluralism in such vital areas as broadcasting, education and trade, he continued. Pluralism was a vote of confidence in the people, and a democratically-elected government could not but reciprocate the trust bestowed by the electorate. In the last 30 years, Malta had radically transformed an economy dependent entirely on the presence of foreign military bases into one with thriving financial, industrial and tourism sectors. That transformation had given the Maltese economy the buoyancy it required as it moved to join the European Union. Malta's role in launching the concept of common heritage had been acknowledged by many. It was committed to the creation of a global society based on the principles of dignity and solidarity.

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Singapore's Foreign Minister, S. Jayakumar, said the United Nations had relatively little experience in managing intra-State conflicts and intra-State peace-keeping. The dilemmas faced in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda showed that it was still evolving an approach to the new challenges. Second-generation peace-keeping was intrusive and upset traditional concepts of sovereignty. Yet, how could the consent requirement apply in cases where there was no effective central government, as in Rwanda and Somalia? Meanwhile, critics were apprehensive that United Nations involvement in Haiti and Georgia only provided political cover for certain Member States to pursue their own interests.

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Given its political, financial and institutional limitations, the United Nations could not be expected to resolve all forms of civil war, he continued. However, the Organization needed to establish guidelines to decide where involvement would be necessary and effective. As the root causes of many conflicts were socio-economic, it should concentrate on development aid and assistance. The United Nations could not operate effectively if it had to live from hand to mouth. Member States must pay their assessments in full and on time. Individual States had no reason to withhold contributions as each had the opportunity to argue its case for or against any United Nations activity. They could also scrutinize the budgetary implications of each decision and negotiate a consensus with other Member States.

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Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen said United Nations peace-keeping activities were a matter of the highest priority for his country. The United Nations could rely on Denmark to respond swiftly and efficiently to the need for troops, civilian police and humanitarian personnel. Denmark was also ready to share its experience and knowledge of peace-keeping training and requirements. The cooperation between the Baltic States, the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom on a Baltic peace-keeping battalion was a good example of an international effort. At present, a Lithuanian platoon was serving in the Danish United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) battalion in Croatia.

The Foreign Minister noted that the availability of funds and troops for peace-keeping operations was limited. "I fail to understand how some Member States can advocate United Nations actions, including peace-keeping operations, and then at the same time refuse to pay the bill", he said. Communication between the Security Council and troop-contributing States was imperative. The safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel was another important matter. Attacks on peace-keepers could not be tolerated and Denmark strongly supported United Nations efforts to draft a legally binding treaty dealing with that issue.

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Guatemala's Foreign Minister, Gladys Marithza Ruiz Sanchez de Vielman, said her Government was committed to validating human rights and working for peace. That commitment had been strengthened through the peace negotiations with the Unidad Revolucionaría Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). Agreements had been signed to cover such areas as human rights verification mechanisms and the resettlement of displaced persons. Guatemala was also committed to broad-ranging cooperation with the United Nations in the field of human rights. It was hoped that in the face of the refusal by the other party to return to the negotiating table or to disarm, the response would be to close off sources of finance so as to avoid unwarranted armed action. The other party must realize that integration in the democratic process was the only way for it to achieve legitimacy.

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Guatemala had the support of a council of distinguished citizens which would define a procedure for solving the territorial dispute with Belize, she continued. That would be undertaken within the framework of Guatemala's firm position, which was well known to the international community. Guatemala was ready to continue direct discussions with Belize and the United Kingdom in order to arrive at a peaceful solution to the dispute. She expressed solidarity with the people of Haiti, stressing the need to meet the basic needs of the population there. She also expressed hope that a democratic and pluralistic system would be established in Cuba.

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Afghan Foreign Minister Najibullah Lafraie, reading a message from President Burhannudin Rabbani, said the sacrifice of more than 1.5 million lives and the immeasurable destruction in his country had contributed to ending the cold war and reducing the threat of nuclear confrontation. Afghanistan was astonished to see a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the world community in assisting the realization of its legitimate aspirations. It needed assistance to accelerate the political process, and to undertake reconstruction and mine clearance to facilitate the repatriation of refugees. Afghanistan also sought effective international measures to stop foreign interference in the form of supplies of weapons and ammunition.

The Foreign Minister went on to say that Afghanistan's present crisis was not a civil war but rather an imposed armed conflict fuelled from outside. The Security Council's good intentions could be realized only if it addressed the actual cause of the fighting and considered enforcement measures. Last month, a Supreme Islamic Council in Herat had adopted an 11-point resolution intended to contribute to the consolidation of peace and the political process. The United Nations special mission should try to search for common ground to ensure a compromise that would lead to a national rapprochement. Afghanistan yearned for peace more than anything else. However, it had extremely limited means and massive needs, and must have international support.

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Robert Dossou, Benin's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation said the economic and social problems of developing countries must be tackled at the roots. All international players must reach agreement on strategies to avoid chaos in the developing countries, particularly the least developed ones. The adoption of "An agenda for development" during the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations would demonstrate a clear commitment to development. It should complement "An Agenda for Peace" as well as "Agenda 21". Other programmes of action, including the New Agenda for Development in Africa in the 1990s, had not received adequate funding to be effective. Most African countries had undertaken far-reaching political and economic reforms, and they deserved support for those efforts.

Developed countries must pursue a policy of writing off the debt of African and least developed countries, he said. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) had produced mixed

results for developing countries, especially those dependent on food imports. Bold trade decisions designed to benefit Africa were needed. The World Summit for Social Development should do more than just acknowledge Africa's problems; it should develop concrete measures for eliminating poverty, creating productive employment and fostering social integration. The Summit should also proclaim an international decade to eliminate poverty.

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States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction, have established an Ad Hoc Group to consider measures, including verification measures, and proposals to strengthen that instrument. They took that action at the end of a Special Conference in Geneva on Saturday.

According to a Final Declaration adopted by the States Parties, the measures and proposals to be considered are to be included, as appropriate, in a legally binding instrument. The Ad Hoc Group will form part of a gradual approach towards the establishment of a coherent regime to enhance the effectiveness of, and improve compliance with, the Convention.

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